



MEDIA RELEASE

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Knox County Medical Death Investigator Attains Rare Certification

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knox County’s Morgan Maples is one in a million.

Maples recently earned “Fellow” status as a medicolegal death investigator through the American Medicolegal Death Investigators.

She is only one of seven people in Tennessee who holds the designation and only six are active. There are only about 200 people who have attained the status nationwide.

Medical death investigators are charged with looking into any death that falls under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner—including all suspicious, violent, unexplained and unexpected deaths—and are considered the forensic center’s first responders.

“We have a world class team at the Regional Forensic Center,” said Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs. “They are committed to continuing education and do great work in a difficult environment. Morgan is a prime example of how they constantly go above and beyond.”

Maples first joined the staff at the Knox County Regional Forensic Center, which serves 23 counties in East Tennessee, in October 2015. Prior to that she was valedictorian at Union County High School and graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in anthropology, and from George Washington University with a master’s degree in science crime scene investigations. Between her studies, she completed a field school in forensic anthropology in Bucharest, Romania.

“Morgan is an excellent manager of our death investigator team and has led her team through the difficulties of both the pandemic and current overdose epidemic with record numbers of investigations,” said Chris Thomas, chief administrative officer of the KC RFC. “She is passionate about the quality of her work and that of her team. The Regional Forensic Center is grateful for her leadership and her commitment to the field of medical death investigations.”

The certification requires a year-long study process to pass a 5.5-hour long exam about investigating specific death scenes; multiple fatalities; atypical death scenes; institutional deaths; demonstrating leadership skills; demonstrating legal knowledge; communication skills; and demonstrating advanced forensic science knowledge.

Applicants must also be certified at the ABMDI “Registry” level; have at least an associate degree; be employed by a medical examiner jurisdiction; and have at least 4,000 hours of death investigation experience in the past six years.

The Knox County Regional Forensic Center conducts death investigations and autopsy services 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

The ABMI is a voluntary national, non-profit professional certification board designed to promote professionalism amongst death investigators in coroner and medical examiner jurisdiction throughout the country.

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